G.T.

PEOPLE

Professor goes about business of fighting bias

The man who inadvertently helped give birth to Amendment 2, and then quite purposely sought to strike it down, spent the historic day like the university professor he is.

While others were calling news conferences, Professor John Miller attended a staff meeting at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, then went home to grade term papers.

After learning that Amendment 2 — the ballot initiative that would have banned laws protecting gays from discrimination based on their sexual orientation — had been ruled unconstitutional, Miller gave a calm, measured response.

"This is an affirmation of the basic civil rights of gays and lesbians," Miller said.

"It's a monumental decision."

RAYMOND McCAFFREY

Miller has made some big decisions himself. Now 56, he decided in midlife, as the divorced father of two, to come out as a gay man. Then immediately after Amendment 2 was passed by Colorado voters in November 1992, he joined the plaintiffs who sought to overturn the initiative.

Miller was raised in a large, working-class Roman Catholic family in New Jersey, the son of a truck driver, the oldest of 10 children. He was an altar boy and attended a Catholic high school. He got good grades and worked after school. And yet he felt he had a problem.

"I felt differently in my attraction toward males."

That didn't stop Miller from seeking a traditional life. He married the sister of a roommate in graduate school. The marriage lasted eight years, and produced two children. Sexuality, Miller explained, was not the reason for the divorce — he and his wife just grew in different directions. But Miller's path would lead him to explore his homosexuality. "I simply decided that was what I was hiding and fighting all of my life."

He told close friends, and later his family. There was surprise, but finally acceptance. While teaching college in Gettysburg, Pa., Miller began spending his free time in New York City, where — through an organization of gay fathers — he met his "life partner" of nearly 13 years.

In 1987, after earning his doctorate in Spanish, Miller accepted a job heading the Languages and Cultures Department at UCCS. He came to Colorado Springs not quite aware of the extent of the city's conservatism. So Miller, a civil rights activist in college, held a meeting at his house, attracting a handful of people who responded to a notice he had placed in a local gay and lesbian newspaper. They met to discuss how to persuade the city to pass a law with gay rights language.

"We had no idea the meeting in this one little room would have on Colorado politics."

Indeed, when the city's Human Relations Commission proposed such a law in 1991, the opposition became galvanized. Although the proposal was shot down, opponents continued their fight statewide and formed Colorado for Family Values, the group that initiated Amendment 2 and sold it to the voters.

After the election, Richard Evans, Denver Mayor Wellington Webb's 33-year-old liaison to the gay and lesbian community, and activist Linda Fowler recruited Miller to join them as plaintiffs. The challengers also included the cities of Denver, Boulder and Aspen, which already had ordinances protecting gays from discrimination, a Boulder minister, a Denver female police officer, and a state employee. Another plaintiff died of AIDS.

Miller admitted it was a tough decision to step forward and challenge Amendment 2 as a participant in the lawsuit. But he made it after consulting with his family and the man he lives with.

"I think that the Amendment 2 process has allowed gays and lesbians to affirm themselves in the community," Miller said. "And this is a very positive outgrowth."

On Tuesday, Denver District Judge Jeffrey Bayless ruled Amendment 2 was indeed unconstitutional.

But how could a judge overrule the will of the people? Bayless made special note of a passage from an earlier Amendment 2 decision by the Colorado Supreme Court. The passage said, "One's right to life, liberty, and property . . . and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote."

In effect, the judge decided Amendment 2 did not deny special rights, but rather constitutional ones.

"Popular will," Miller said, "is not what determines justice."

Raymond McCaffrey's column appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

uilding group

evicted from the junior/senior high building at the end of the school year. The school district still owes $450,000 in back lease payments.

School Superintendent Lionel Robertson said the school board will meet with its attorney tonight to discuss the case during its regular meeting at 7 p.m. at Ellicott Elementary School. The school district is not mentioned in the suit, but it is the only entity with money to hire a lawyer. The school board has already spent some $300,000 trying to negotiate a settlement with the bondholders and is still trying to come up with alternative solutions to the dilemma. "Right now, we have no idea what to do," Robertson said.

D-11 property tax rate on tonight's board agenda

Gazette Telegraph

The Colorado Springs School District 11 board will set its property tax rate for 1994 at tonight's meeting.

The board will decide whether to include a slight levy to help cover the costs of elevators, ramps and other items needed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and of removing hazardous materials such as asbestos and radon. Last year, this component represented about 0.2 percent of the school taxes paid in District 11.

To tack on the extra levy, the board must hold a hearing. It has decided to break from its regular agenda at 7:15 p.m. today to take public comments if it decides to use the option. The meeting will be at the Central Administration Building, 1115 N. El Paso St.

By far the largest portion of school property tax rates is set by the Legislature. Last year, the state-approved levy accounted for nearly 98 percent of school taxes in District 11. That portion of the tax rate has already been set and is the same as the current one.

UCE J. GREENO, 71, owner of Julie's tessen for 13 years, died Dec. 8, 1993, at his do Springs home.
vices are pending. Dove-Witt Family Mor- 6630 S. U.S. Highway 85/87, Fountain, is ng arrangements.

Greeno was born Nov. 15, 1922, in Leonard- Kan., to Herbert C. and Georgia G. (Breth- Greeno. His mother lives in Kansas City, Kan. was married Dec. 28, 1955, in Kansas City ie (Borowick) Greeno, who survives. He also vived by a son, Grant of Colorado Springs, daughter, Desiree of Peyton.

Greeno had lived in Colorado Springs since and was a member of America Legion Post and the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Kansas He was a graduate of Kansas City Commu- ollege.

was in the Army Air Corps from 1942 to and in the Air Force from 1950 to 1951 and ed the Purple Heart, Air Medal with Bronze r and the Korean Service Medal, among awards.

LLUTION WATCH

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ation provided by Clean Air Campaign.

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IN MEMORIUM

SHARPTON, EDITH M. — Funeral Services 3:00 PM Thursday Shrine of Remembrance "America the Beautiful" Chapel of Roses. Rev. David L. Hunting officiating. Friends may call TODAY from 4:00-8:00 PM at the funeral home. Entombment: Shrine of Remembrance Mausoleum Gate of Heaven. Memorial contributions may be made to Shriner's Crippled Children's Hospital, 1275 Fairfax Ave., Salt Lake City, UT 84103 or to the Community Congregational Church, 103 Pawnee Ave., Manitou Springs, CO 80829.

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